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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage May 1 on the meeting between Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council Chairperson-designate Lai Shin-yuan and Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chairman-designate Chiang Pin-kun on Wednesday night; on China's Taiwan Affairs Office's response to Lai's appointment; and on the controversy over Taiwan's Soochow University's attempt to limit professors' TV appearances. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" tried to work out several messages that the appointment of Lai has sent to China, the United States and Japan. End summary.

"Use Lai Shin-yuan to Decrease the Suspicion that [Taiwan's President-elect Ma Ying-jeou] Is Pro-China!"

Lai I-chung, the Principal Deputy Director of the Department of International Affairs in the DPP, opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (5/1):

"... Although China has not commented openly on the appointment of [Taiwan's] Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairperson, this appointment undoubtedly is an 'accident' for the Beijing government. If [China] thinks that [Taiwan's President-elect] Ma Ying-jeou had no choice but made the appointment in order to expand his base [in Taiwan], China can even legitimately reckon that Ma's advocacy does not have the support of the majority of the Taiwan people. If that is the case, then why does China have to accommodate Ma and fulfill all of Ma's requests? Against this background, how on earth does Beijing view the 'advantageous policies' that Ma proposed, for which China's cooperation is required? Does Beijing see Ma's positive moves as [ways] to mitigate cross-strait relations, or does [Beijing] think that Ma is only attempting to ease his predicament, in which he is under attack from both left and right, by pressuring China?

"Since the appointment has limited effect on [Ma's] claim to expand his base in society, it will be more complicated for Ma's government to integrate its strategic teams for cross-strait and foreign affairs. [The appointment] even gives China an excuse to 'listen and watch'. The only explanation for the appointment is that it is to respond to international concerns that Ma is too pro-China.

"The United States has now taken a more cautious attitude compared to its encouragement to resume dialogue [across the Strait] at the end of March. [The change of attitude] is not only because of the 'China craze' after the 'Hu-Siew meeting' [in the Boao Forum], but also is connected with Ma's strategic thinking that 'cross-strait [relations] outweigh foreign affairs'. The United States is probably worried that Ma's government, because of China's opposition, will downgrade the level of the Taiwan-U.S. security cooperation in order to ease cross-strait relations. Japan is also worried, once controversies arise between Japan and China, whether Taiwan, at Beijing's request, will close ranks with Beijing to

confront Japan. Giving the MAC to someone who is from a 'non-Blue' background, whose party [the Taiwan Solidarity Union or TSU] supports arms procurement, and whose party leader [TSU spiritual leader and former President Lee Teng-hui] has a significant Japan connection, indeed has the effect of partly dissolving international concerns that Ma is pro-China. By the same token, considering the issue of [Ma] integrating [his] teams, does the international community also think that there are still many variables in Taiwan's cross-Strait policies and is therefore lowering its expectations?  
..."

YOUNG